

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMMBASSY PARIS 2103

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVICK

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMMBASSY ANKARA 864

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

USMISSION NATO

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SUMMARY. " CONVENTIONAL WISDOM" IN BELGIUM WITH REPECT TO NATO

HAS BEEN TO STRESS CONCEPT OF WESTERN COLLECTIVE SECURITY AND TO REGARD NATO AS EXPRESSION OF THAT COMMITMENT. THERE HAS BEEN NO BASIC CHANGE IN BELGIAN VIEWS ON NEED FOR COLLECTIVE SECURITY OR TOWARDS NATO AS BEST MECHANISM TO ACHIEVE IT. END SUMMARY.

1. WE AGREE WITH REPORTED COMMENT BY DIRECTOR OF NATO INFORMATION STAFF THAT THERE IS A "SENSE OF SOLIDARITY" IN BELGIAN PUBLIC OPINION TOWARDS NATO. BELGIANS ARE BASICALLY REALISTS IN ASSESSING WORLD TODAY AND DETECT NO FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES WHICH WOULD TEND TO MAKE COLLECTIVE DEFENSE NO FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES WHICH WOULD TEND TO MAKE COLLECTIVE DEFENSE AGAINST THE SOVIET BLOC UNNECESSARY.

BELGIANS ARE ALSO ACUTELY AWARE THAT DUE TO THEIR SIZE THEY ARE IN NO POSITION TO PROTECT THEMSELVES WITHOUT THE HELP OF THEIR LIKEMINDED ALLIES. FOR THEIR SELF DEFENSE, BELGIANS, THEREFORE, REMAIN STRONGLY COMMITTED TO NATO.

2. AS CONFIRMATION OF BELGIAN ATTITUDE, WHICH WE BELIEVE IS WIDE-SPREAD THROUGHOUT ALL SIGNIFICANT ELEMENTS OF BELGIAN SOCIETY, WE HAVE RECENT F-104 REPLACEMENT ISSUE. BELGIAN SOCIALISTS SURFACE IDEA (WHICH WAS RAPIDLY PICKED UP BY TINY COMMUNIST PARTY) THAT BELGIAN GOVERNMENT SHOULD POSTPONE DECISION IN ORDER TO PERMIT

TIME TO EXPLORE MUTUAL EAST-WEST REDUCTION EITHER BILATERALLY BETWEEN BELGIUM AND POLAND OR THROUGH MBFR TALKS. BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTR, RESPONDING TO SOCIALIST INITIATIVE, TRIED OUT IDEA WITH POLES AND RECEIVED PREDICTABLE NEGATIVE REPLY. SOCIALIST INITIATIVE THEN LOST ANY MASS PUBLIC APPEAL IT MIGHT HAVE ACQUIRED WHILE SOCIALIST AND MOST OTHER OPPOSITION PARTIES VOTE AGAINST PRIME MINISTER TINDEMANS IN "NO-CONFIDENCE" VOTE ON ITS SELECTION OF F-16, THEY DID SO FOR INTERNAL POLITICAL REASONS, NOT ON SUBSTANTIVE OR ANTI-NATO GROUNDS.

3. BELGIAN INFORMATION MEDIA HAVE OFTEN BEEN CRITICAL OF NATO (AND OF THE US) ON SPECIFIC MATTERS, BUT RESPONSIBLE CRITICISMS HAS NOT BEEN DIRECTED AGAINST THE FUNDAMENTAL IDEA OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY AND A BASIC SENSE OF COMMON PURPOSE. IN FACT BELGIAN PUBLIC ATTACHES MUCH IMPORTANCE TO NATO AS AN ALLIANCE OF IDEOLOGICALLY LIKE-MINDED STATES, SEEING IT AS UNCLASSIFIED

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AN INSTRUMENT FOR PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC FREEDOMS AMONG ITS MEMBERS AND - IN THE CONTEXT OF DETENTE - IN EASTERN EUROPE.

4. CONCLUSION. BELGIUM CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE TO QUESTION CLOSELY NATO (AND US) INITIATIVES WHICH APPEAR TO BE POLITICALLY REGRESSIVE OR UNDULY WARLIKE (PARTICULARLY THOSE WHICH MIGHT BE EXPENSIVE IN FINANCIAL TERMS). BELGIUM IS NOT ALWAYS HAPPY WITH THE WORLD OR EVEN WITH ITS ALLIES. BUT, UNTIL THE WORLD

CHANGES, BELGIUM WILL CONTINUE TO LOOK ON NATO AS INDISPENSABLE
FOR ITS OWN SECURITY.
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